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Infrastructure Improvements Would Help Spur Local Economy, Create Jobs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento) introduced the Natomas Basin Flood Protection Improvements Act in the House of Representatives. The legislation would deliver on many of the objectives that President Barack Obama is expected to focus on in his State of the Union speech tonight: economic recovery; job creation; and investments in our nation's infrastructure to improve public safety. Matsui's legislation would provide Natomas families and businesses the flood protection they need by authorizing additional construction work on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, and in turn create jobs and support the area's construction industry.

"This is an opportunity for the federal government to deliver for the Sacramento region by improving our public safety, strengthening our economy, and creating good jobs for our constituents," said Congresswoman Matsui. "I look forward to working with my colleagues to authorize this project. This Natomas Basin Flood Protection Improvements Act is a critical component in improving the flood protection of our region."

The Sacramento region is the most at risk urban area to river flooding in the nation. Accordingly, the region has worked continuously to bolster its flood defenses and emergency preparations, and has invested millions of dollars of local, state and federal funding to strengthen its levees. Securing federal authorization for construction in Natomas is the next critical step.

Specifically, Congresswoman Matsui's legislation would authorize full federal participation in the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, which will restore 100-year flood protection and ultimately achieve 200-year level flood protection. Natomas is home to almost 80,000 residents and hundreds of local businesses. The Natomas area is also a key transportation hub for the region, incorporating the Sacramento International Airport, Interstate 5 and Highway 99, all a critical part of the regional economy.

Each year of delay in levee improvements exposes the community, as well as the State of California and the federal government, to additional risk, increased program costs, and direct and indirect impacts to the economic health of the region. It also creates a financial burden for families. Since the Natomas area was remapped by FEMA in 2008, homeowners have been mandated to buy flood insurance, which can cost up to \$1,300 a year.

“My legislation would expedite the completion of urgently needed improvements that protect the people of Sacramento,” said Congresswoman Matsui. “A key component towards addressing public safety concerns in Natomas is seeking federal authorization to allow for these upgrades to move forward more quickly. That is why I introduced this critical measure, and will do everything I can to ensure the project is authorized.”

The foundation for Rep. Matsui’s legislation is a recently completed report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which declared the 42 mile levee improvement project to be in the federal government’s interest. The State of California and Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) have started work on the levee improvement project, and by the end of this year will have spent \$360 million on roughly half the project. The upgraded levees in Natomas will be some of the widest and strongest levees built in the state and will comply with new, stronger federal levee standards.

“I am working every single day to reduce our risk, ensure flood insurance is affordable, and to increase federal support of Sacramento’s flood protection projects,” Matsui added. “From the Folsom Dam Joint Federal Project to the South Sacramento Streams Group, there are a number of currently authorized flood protection projects that are improving our safety and together will offer our region the best possible flood protection.”

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